

Evaluating Local School Wellness Policies



Why Evaluate?

Evaluation is critical to assessing local wellness policy activities in individual districts and across each state, and helps states target technical assistance and keep districts accountable. Evaluation:

- Improves the content of, support for, and implementation of local wellness policies
- Documents environmental changes, staff needs, and changes in revenue
 - Provide better services for staff, faculty, and students
 - Make a case for more staff, funding, or policies
- Ensures programs are on course
- Leads to identification of new and changing needs

What Information Should Be Collected?

Both process and outcome data will be useful in evaluating the success of local school wellness policies. You should collect the data that provides the best information to track and improve policy implementation and maintenance. Examples of process and outcome data include:

- Process Data:
 - Number and type of individuals reached
 - Activities implemented
 - Quality and consistency of efforts/information.
- Outcome Data:
 - Changes to physical and health education programs
 - School culture and environment changes
 - Changes in school nutrition programs including marketing and promotion.

What does success look like?

Examples of success include:

- Policies have been implemented
- Policies were changed if they did not achieve desired outcomes, or if they were causing unintended negative outcomes.
- Policies were changed if the needs of students or staffed changed
- Barriers to success have been identified and overcome.

Data sources that will help evaluate success of local school wellness policies include the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) School Health Profiles and other evaluation data that might include interviews and focus groups with school administrators, parents, teachers, students, community members; and observations of changes to a school's nutrition and physical activity environment. State and local education agencies may also benefit from use of questions on physical activity from CDC's Youth Risk Surveillance Survey.

Local School Wellness Policy Evaluation Questions



Evaluation questions should link to the state's or local district's priorities. Sample questions are listed below.

State-Level Evaluation Questions:

Process Questions

- How far along are districts in implementing wellness policies?
- What are the common goals for nutrition education and physical education across districts?
- What are the common nutrition guidelines and guidelines for reimbursable meals across districts?
- What are the common mechanisms for community involvement across districts?
- What are common barriers to implementing and evaluating wellness policies?
- What can the state do to facilitate policy implementation and evaluation?

Outcome Questions

- What were the intended outcomes of the policies? What were the actual outcomes?
- What are the documented (using tools such as YRBS and SHPPS) changes to the nutrition and physical activity environments of local schools?
- What technical assistance can be provided to improve its effectiveness?

District-Level Evaluation Questions:

Process Questions

- What activities were undertaken? When?
- What was the level of quality of the activities? How many people were involved?
- How many people in the district received copies of the local wellness policy?
- In how many schools are food service staff aware of the local wellness policy?
- How many teachers received training to implement physical and nutrition education recommendations?
- Were resources and support available to implement the policy? Are resources and support available for maintenance of the policy?

Outcome Questions

- What were the intended outcomes of the policy? What were the actual outcomes?
- Were there any unintended outcomes of the policy?
- What parts of the policy got implemented? Did the parts that were implemented address the greatest needs of students or school staff?
- What are the documented (using tools such as YRBS and SHPPS) and observed (captured through interviews and focus groups) changes to the nutrition and physical activity environments of local schools?
- What changes, if any, should be made to the policy to improve its effectiveness? What changes should be made to address changing needs?